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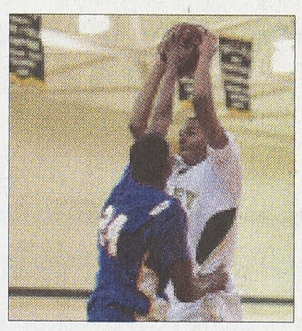


The men's basketball team defeated L.A. Trade Tech College at the buzzer Saturday.

SEE SPORTS PAGE 6

lavalleystar.com | December 8, 2010 | Volume 73 Issue 9

SPRING CLASSES CUT IN RESPONSE TO BUDGET CRISIS

Campus community frustrated as available classes dwindle.

STEPHANIE COLMAN
STAFF WRITER

Administration announced cancellations to the Spring 2011 semester Friday in response to Valley College's ongoing budget deficit currently estimated at more than $2 million. Approximately 120 classes were cut at an anticipated cost-savings of more than $500,000.

The loss of spring classes comes just three weeks after a one-third reduction to the Winter 2011 session.

"It's incredibly depressing for all of us right now," said Valley President Sue Carleo. "We're here to offer classes to help students achieve their educational goals, yet we've hit this ceiling of what we're permitted to do based on the funds we get."

According to Carleo, Valley's financial fiasco began back in 2005 when the budget was strong and the district directed the college to push for as much growth as possible. As a result, the school generously scheduled classes, many of which failed to reach maximum enrollment capacity, resulting in less money being paid to the school.

"A couple years later, the funding system changed so that unless you were incredibly productive – meaning higher (class enrollment) to educate more students with fewer teachers – you were at a disadvantage. Valley got caught in that," Carleo explained.

A series of subsequent annual cuts at the district and state level further compounded the problem, creating a perfect storm resulting in debt so great, cutting classes is the only way to effectively address the problem.

The biggest challenge for students has been losing classes following open registration. By the time Valley student Chanel Godinez learned her winter chemistry class was cut, similar classes at area colleges were already full.

"I was very upset about the fact that the classes were cut so close to the start of the semester," she said. The fact that it was in the middle of enrollment left many people in a panic. It makes me sad that I can't wait to get out of Valley, not just simply to move on in life, but mostly because I am tired of watching a once pleasant and helpful school deteriorate."

Valley student Cynthia Garcia found out her spring political science class was cut, leaving her in a desperate search for an equivalent class. With many courses already full, she says she'll either try to enroll elsewhere or attempt to add the class in person in February.

"I know a couple classmates who are taking a class here at Valley, one at Mission and another at Pierce, and they go back and forth from campus to campus," she said. I might be doing the same thing. All I know is that a higher educa-

|See **SPRING CLASSES**, Page 2|

NATALIE LOZANO| VALLEY STAR

SAFETY - Students walk down the service road on campus. Campus sheriff's are now offering escorts to students attending day and night classes.

VALLEY BLOOD DRIVE SAVES LIVES

More Valley College students than in previous years lined up to be part of the blood drive.

IVAN ZUNIGA
STAFF WRITER

Students flooded Monarch Hall wanting to register and donate blood this year as they eagerly waited to get through the donation process. More than 60 students donated to the event hosted by the Valley College Student Health Center and American Red Cross.

The registration table was busy from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. with students ready to donate blood. Donators received two tickets to the Laugh Factory, a Cold Stone Creamery Coupon and a chance to win in a $500 shopping spree through a drawing.

"I've done it three times," Valley Student David Andrade said, "It's a good thing to do and it helps people out. It's very easy and the nurses are very nice, unless you're scared of needles."

The donation process is simple yet intimidating to some; first participants must go through the screening process, then a brief physical is administered that requires checking temperatures, pulse and blood pressure. Blood extraction with a one-time-use sterile needle takes around 10 minutes, while the entire process takes about an hour.

"For the first timers we give them information so we can calm them down," said Supervisor Jeevan Zamvre. "...and everybody has to pass the questionnaire to donate blood.

First time donors were required to bring a valid form of identification, such as a driver license or state identification card. Participants had to be at least 16 years old, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds and have a blood pressure level of 180/100. The ARC states less than 38 percent of the population is eligible to give blood.

"Participants need to have a certain amount of iron and it has to be 12.5 percent and above," said Technician Ingrid Chavez. "We make sure everyone goes through this process so we can go on with the donation."

Some students were ineligible to donate blood. At least one gay student was unable to donate due to his sexual orientation. According to a FDA report, male-to-male intercourse carries a higher potential of HIV and other infectious disease, which can be transferred to donor recipients. It is illegal for gay males to donate.

The ARC recommends eating a meal low in fat, and staying hydrated prior to donation. After the donation, patients who feel weak or dizzy are given a snack and juice to recover faster.

SAMSON UBA | VALLEY STAR

GIVING BLOOD - David Andrade, 20 (undecided) gives a pint of blood as required by Red Cross

According to RedCrossBlood.org, getting blood from donor to recipient is a five-step process. It begins with a screened individual who gives a pint of blood and several small test tubes. Next, donor blood is sent to one of five ARC facilities where blood type is determined and tests for infection are conducted. At the same time as testing it's processed and separated by spinning centrifuges into its various components – platelets, red cells, and plasma. Then the components are placed into storage.

"This is my 10th year. She's been doing this for almost six years," said volunteer Allan Fowler referring to his wife Terry. "I was already a donor and when I retired I wanted to do something, and saving lives seemed like a good idea."

It is estimated that 16 million people give blood every year according to the ARC and about 38,000 donations are needed every day.

Usually 40 to 50 participants are expected to donate blood at these blood drives, but this time Valley had more than 65 students show up and register to donate blood.

The ARC holds more than 200,000 blood drives per year, and supplies 40 percent of the supply. They say every two seconds someone in America is in need of donor blood.

VARUGHAN CHAPANIAN, PHOTO EDITOR | VALLEY STAR

ROLE MODEL - Matty Fierro plays with her two daughters.

EDUCATION'S ALL IN THE FAMILY

The love of learning is a family affair for one Valley College couple.

STEPHANIE COLMAN
STAFF WRITER

It's homework time for the Fierro family. As 8-year-old Melissa* studies her spelling words, parents Maite ("Matty") and Christian feverishly work on assignments of their own, while keeping a watchful eye on their youngest, 3-year-old Elizabeth.

Raising two young kids is enough to keep any family busy. So is holding down a job while going to school. Combining the two gives new meaning to the importance of time management.

"It's a balancing act," said child development major and Valley College student Matty Fierro. "It's hard when you're young and you have kids because you need to revolve your classes around your kids and what they need."

The daily revolution starts at 6:30 a.m. when Matty and Christian launch the morning routine of getting ready, serving breakfast, packing lunches and making it out the door as a family of four in time to drop the kids off at school, and make it to their own morning classes. After a busy day of school and work, the family meets back at home 12 hours later – just in time for the

THE LOW DOWN

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS SPRUNG A LEAK

Julian Assange, the face of WikiLeaks.com, may be the most wanted man in the world.

CRISTINA SERRATO

Better than fiction: Cablegate is a true tale of espionage, treason, corruption and leaked government security secrets, all accompanied by a worldwide hunt for the journalist responsible.

"Information should be free. It belongs in the public domain," said Bradley Manning, the U.S. soldier who was arrested for treason earlier this year after he admitted to stealing classified government information and passing it on to WikiLeaks.com.

WikiLeaks.com founder and notorious hacker, 29-year-old Julian Assange, has voluntarily become the "face" of WikiLeaks, and in doing so, he is being unfairly held as the "bad guy" by some after WikiLeaks published more than 250,000 leaked U.S. embassy cables -- electronic caches of classified information. The cables contained embarrassing government secrets, detailed accounts of corruption by foreign regimes and details of human trafficking and illegal arms trafficking for more than 250 U.S. Embassies. The batches, called "Cablegate" by WikiLeaks, were the third batch of confidential government secrets released within the last six months.

Last Tuesday, Colombia University's School of International and Public Affairs, a distinguished training ground for future diplomats, warned its students not to link to the WikiLeaks Web site or discuss the subject of WikiLeaks online, as it might affect their political career. John A. Coatsworth, dean of Columbia's SIPA quickly changed the school stance on the WikiLeaks affair and issued a statement Monday recanting the previous warning. He stated in an e-mail to SIPA students, "Freedom of information and expression is a core value of our

|See **COLUMN**, Page 2|

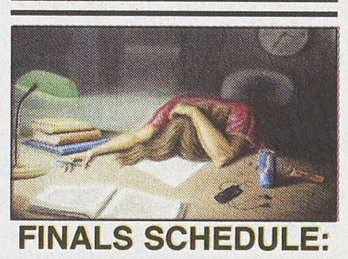
AMERICAN HEROES

Veterans

The Valley Star profiled three Valley College students who served in the United States military.

SEE SPECIAL PAGE 4 and 5

ONLINE



FINALS SCHEDULE:

The finals schedule can be found online.

This and more can be found in full @ www.lavalleystar.com

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SPRING CLASSES

Continued from page 1

tion is getting harder to obtain."

According to Carleo, administration is constantly looking for new ways to save money, citing this year's implementation of a copy allowance for instructors, which caps photocopies at 200 per instructor and has saved $20,000 in paper costs. Information that used to be mailed to faculty is now sent via e-jmail or posted online, saving several thousand dollars in postage.

"It comes down to looking at every single thing we can do and counting everything where we can make a savings," Carleo said. "Our last resort is to cut classes."

Information regarding cancelled classes is first sent to students via email. Administration asks that students make sure the online Student Information System has current contact information.

PARENTS

Continued from page 1

race to dinner, homework, bath time, and bedtime.

"We don't stop from the moment we get up," Matty said. "You can't get off the schedule. I'm exhausted by the end of the day."

Short power naps, dogged determination, and for Christian, the occasional AMP Energy Drink are what help get them through.

Prior to attending Valley, Christian Fierro, a political science major, served six years in the U.S. Air Force. His regimented military experience helps keep the family on task.

"Sometimes I don't want to take a class, but he's military motivated," said Matty. "If it wasn't for him, I'd have probably given up. With kids and school, it's really a lot. It's not easy to be a parent and a student and work. I don't know what I'd do without my husband."

As a married couple, Matty and Christian's "date nights" usually consist of doing homework while next to each other. Despite the scheduling challenges, Matty says being in school together actually strengthens the relationship.

"We have so much in common right now," she said. We understand each other. I understand that he needs to get a paper done, so he's not going to mow the lawn today, and it's okay if I don't wash the dishes right away because I have chapters to read."

Mostly, Matty and Christian are proud of the example they're setting for their children.

"I think it's cool that Melissa knows we go to school just like she does," Matty said. "She's learning about the solar system and I just finished an astronomy class, so I know what to tell her. I really encourage parents to go to college. Every class somehow helps me to be a better parent. It's nice to go to school and then turn around and be able to use it. It's really cool. I love that feeling."

(*Children's names have been changed for privacy.)

COLUMN

Continued from page 1

institution…SIPA's position is that students have a right to discuss and debate any information in the public arena that they deem relevant to their studies or to their role as global citizens, and to do so without fear of adverse consequences."

At least someone remembered the First Amendment and the Freedom of Information Act.

During a voluntarily meeting Monday with the London Metropolitan Police, Assange was arrested. He is not facing charges for treason or espionage, but rather two counts of "sexual crimes" stemming from a broken condom, which he failed to disclose to his partner(s) -- a crime in Europe. Assange has openly threatened that if he was arrested, killed or if WikiLeaks was permanently removed from the Internet he would release a "poison pill" -- a cache of damaging U.S. government secrets that may include information on BP and Guantanamo Bay.

And now that Assange has been taken into custody, the "poison pill' may have been distributed to more than a thousand Web sites which mirror the current WikiLeaks site, called WikiLeaks.ch.

The "pill" likely contains another embarrassing leak for the U.S. government who is currently deciding whether to charge Assange with espionage; although, the charges may not stick because he is a U.S. citizen and journalist, but not a spy. In order to bypass his journalistic freedom, the U.S. State Department is now investigating his merit as a journalist. Typical. The U.S. government officials are demanding Assange's head on a platter.

It is rumored that Web sites who have mirrored the new WikiLeaks, after the previous WikiLeaks.com, .org, and .net sites were shut down by officials and the Web server EveryDNS.net, may be 'flagged' by the U.S. government. Supporters of his Web site are no longer able to donate money via Paypal, or view the cables on Amazon.com. For reading this article you may be put on the U.S. "watch list," so be sure to burn after reading, and hide your copy of "The Catcher in the Rye," because when you get that ominous knock on the door, it's just a reminder that Freedom of Speech is only a figment of our imaginations.

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ASU DEBATES FUNDING STUDENT INTERN

The Associated Student Union debated Tuesday whether to approve $3,500 for a Career Transfer Center intern.

JON SEELEY
NEWS EDITOR

The ASU Executive Council Tuesday approved $3,500 for a Career Transfer Center intern, $2,500 for an ASU winter retreat, and $480 for ASU graduation sashes.

The two-day winter retreat to Palm Springs called "ASU training" will feature workshops, and the 10 ASU graduation sashes reading "ASU" were approved unanimously without discussion. After an hour-long debate, the Career Transfer Center intern funds were approved 7-2 with 2 abstentions.

President Hanna Matevosyan voiced opposition to using ASU funds towards an intern saying that hiring fell into the realm of administration, "We ask students to pay a $10 student representation fee," said Matevosyan. "Nowhere in the description does it say we'll take their money to pay for new employees."

Commissioner of Public Relations Christian Fierro voted in favor of the student intern. "We also never told the students we were taking an ASU winter retreat," he countered. "I think if we asked students which was more important they would choose the transfer center."

Commissioner of Evening Division Larisa Michell introduced the agenda item and voted in favor. She described the Transfer Center as chaotic already, and said it will likely become worse in spring as students seek transfer counseling after their classes are cut.

"The interns in the career transfer center are getting pulled away from their actual jobs, and are having to do office work due to budget cuts," said Michell. "… in a time of the worst economic crisis for education it's important to support the career transfer center."

Michell said an immediate solution was necessary for the short-term, and perhaps looking into corporate donors and other sources of funding would be good for the long-term.

Counselor Clive Gordon of the transfer center presented his department's desperate situation to the ASU, which suffered a reduction of administrative funding this year. He will use the $3,500 to hire an additional graduate student intern with a degree in counseling from CSUN to guide Valley students in their educational goals.

Gordon cited the fact he's already exhausted all other avenues including seeking additional funding and grants. Acting Vice President of Student Services Tony Manzano told Gordon that more cuts and reductions were likely. He said he'd gone through three volunteer interns this year, while the retention of paid interns is nearly 100 percent.

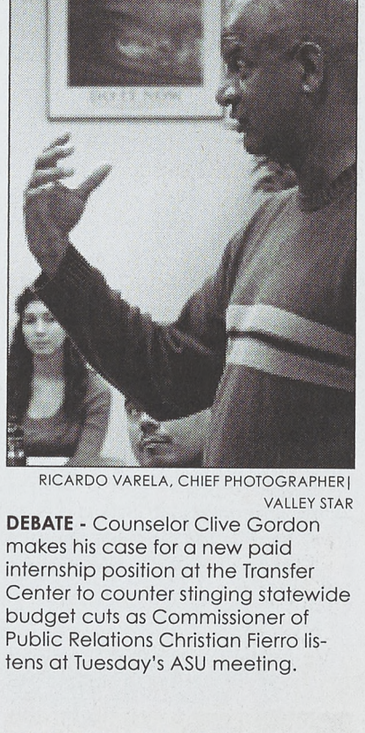
Commisioner of Student & Social Affairs Kourtney Pogue and Treasurer Samuel Markaryan provided the two votes of no.

"My only fear is that when administration notices the funding they may cut more (from the transfer center)," said Markyan. "If the ASU doesn't continue funding then this could backfire, leaving the transfer center with even less funding."

Votes in favor included Javiera Infante, ICC Senate Rep; Commissioners Jennifer Hawkins, Athletics; Joy Palumbo, Campus/ Environmental Affairs; Rocio Benites, Ethnic/ Cultural Affairs; Larisa Michell, Evening Division; Elizabeth Valldejuli, Political Affairs; and Christian Fierro, Public Relations. Vice President Kazooba Kawamara and Commissioner of Fine Arts Tamara Martinez abstained.

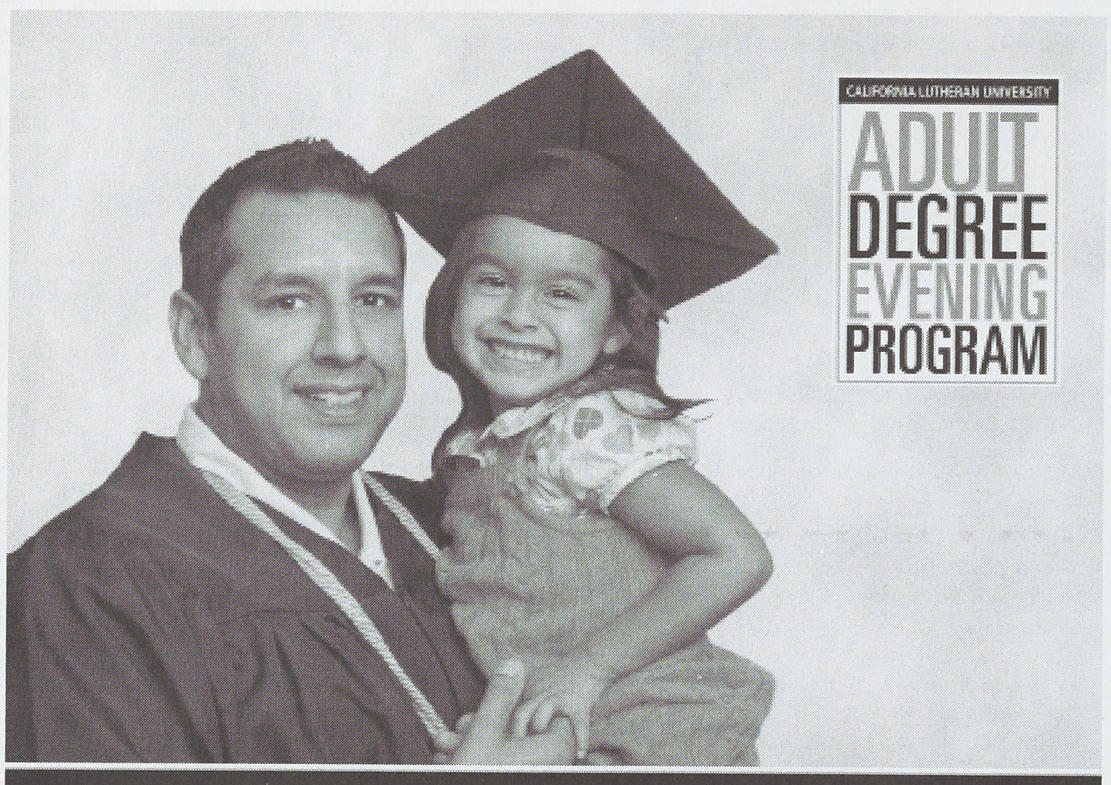
A stipulation was added that this was a one-shot deal, designed to prove to administration that an additional intern was useful to students attempting to utilize the under budgeted and overburdened transfer center. Gordon hopes this will prove to administration the necessity of extra help at the CTC. The intern will work in the evenings from about 3 to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 15 hours per week, beginning in spring of 2011.

"That's wonderful and has my support," said Fierro referring to the benefits for students.



RICARDO VARELA, CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER| VALLEY STAR

DEBATE - Counselor Clive Gordon makes his case for a new paid internship position at the Transfer Center to counter stinging statewide budget cuts as Commissioner of Public Relations Christian Fierro listens at Tuesday's ASU meeting.



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DO NOT THROW THE ARROW WHICH WILL RETURN AGAINST YOU

"Anti-American operative with blood on his hands" paves the way for the rebirth of investigative journalism.

JON SEELEY
NEWS EDITOR

Greater protection of whistleblowers was part of the "Obama-Biden" plan back in 2008 when President Obama was President-elect. So much for that promise. Since elected, Obama has actually exercised greater force against whistleblowers than Bush ever did. No clearer a case than the persecution of new-media icon Julian Assange, one of the founders of the WikiLeaks sites.

The Obama and Bush administrations have had no problem with breaching the privacy of ordinary citizens through wiretaps, stolen e-mails, and airport scanners that bombard passengers with radiation and remove clothing from the equation. Not to mention censorship and clandestine military operations that train or finance foreigners who eventually turn against us.

Liberty and privacy-stripping efforts in the name of anti-terror and national security is a bipartisan effort. Now they take an indignant stance when the tables are turned.

Furthermore, they are shooting the messenger.

Assange is at the very least providing information that any media outlet would deem newsworthy – evidenced by willful publication of the material by The Guardian of Britain, The New York Times, Der Spiegel of Germany, El Pais of Spain, and Le Monde of France.

So far, Republican Rep. Ron Paul of Texas is the only politician with the scruples to defend Assange.

"This is media, isn't it?" Paul said in an interview with Fox Business. "I mean, why don't we prosecute The New York Times or anybody that releases this?"

WikiLeaks initially gave all of the 280,000 classified U.S. State Department files to the international media outlets, which The Guardian shared with The New York Times. The media organizations are working together to advise Assange what to publish, and what needs to be removed to protect individuals, according to Le Monde managing editor Sylvie Kaufman.

Assange was asked at the TED convention if it was true that WikiLeaks had released more classified documents in the last few years than the rest of the world media combined.

"Can it possibly be true? It's a worry isn't it? That the rest of the world's media is doing such a bad job," said Assange amidst audience laughter. "That a little group of activists is able to release more of that type of information..."

The diplomatic cables are mostly the stuff of gossip, but some are downright disturbing, such as Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh telling U.S. General David Petraeus that Yemen would publicly claim responsibility for U.S. cruise missile strikes. The cables also revealed that Yemen was using American-trained and funded counter-terrorism units slotted to battle al-Qaida to fight Saleh's domestic enemies.

Evidently, there were no lessons to be learned by America when it indirectly financed the Taliban against the Russians via Pakistan. What about when the CIA recruited and trained al-Qaida. Let's not forget Nicaraguan Contras who provided cocaine for the West Coast during the Reagan Administration.

Outrage has been mostly directed at Pfc. Bradley Manning who provided the leaks, and Assange, instead of against those who are guilty of revealed wrongdoings. Manning was just one of 3,000,000 individuals (or 1 percent of the total U.S. population) with access to the information that was leaked, and the government is surprised.

On a Facebook outburst Sarah Palin compared Assange to Osama bin Laden and wrote, "He is an anti-American operative with blood on his hands." Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee said Assange should be tried for treason, and executed if found guilty. Treason is a legal term to describe disloyalty to one's own country – Assange is Australian.

It's like blaming a surveillance camera that captures a convenience store robbery for the crime.

Hopefully WikiLeaks is the rebirth of investigative journalism harkening back to a time when Daniel Ellsberg released the "Pentagon Papers" in 1971, which exposed the bright shining lies of the Pentagon about the Vietnam conflict – effectively turning public opinion against the war. Ellsberg was also accused of endangering national security.

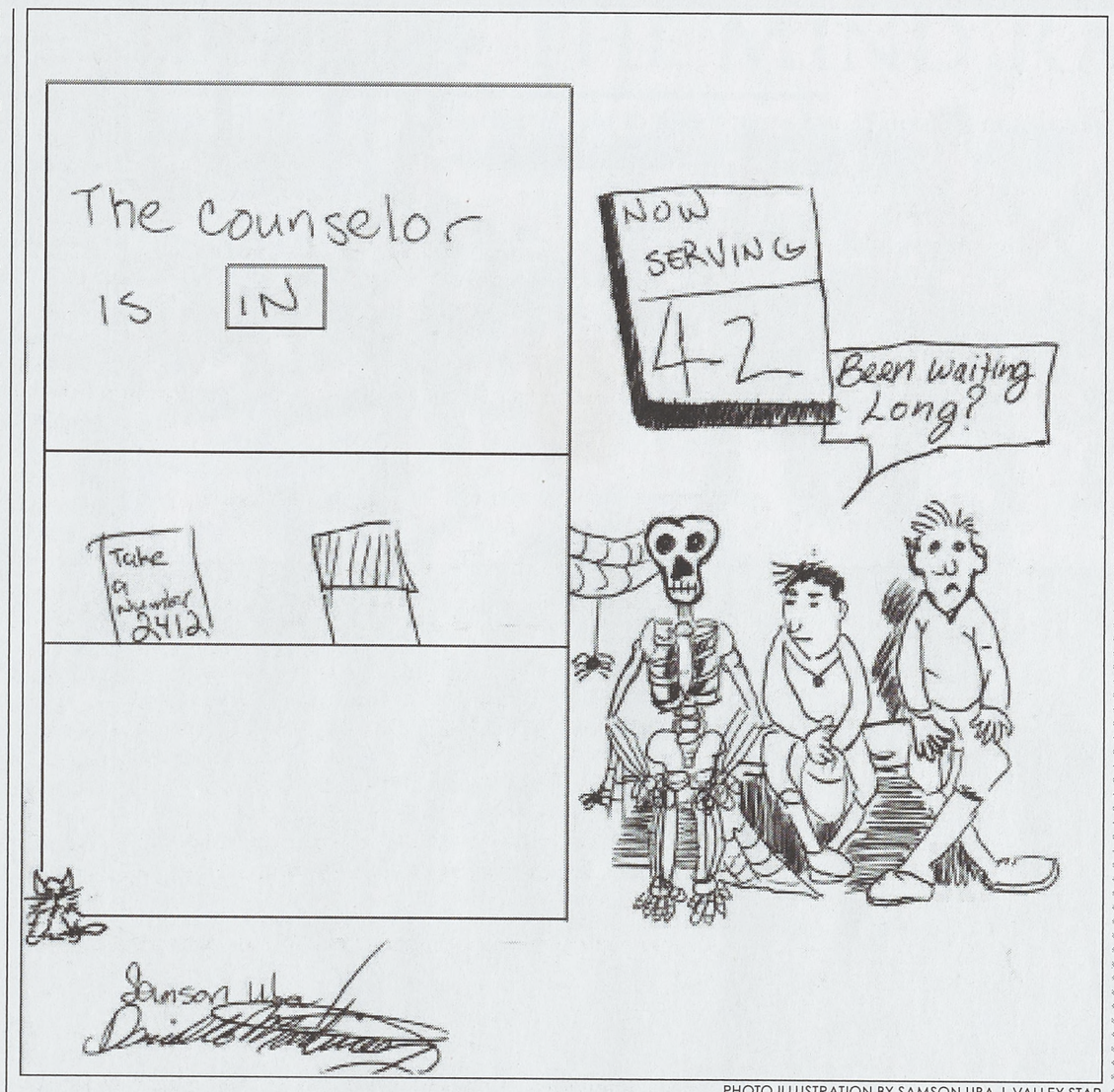


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SAMSON UBA | VALLEY STAR

DESPERATELY SEEKING SERVICE

The lack of counseling appointments is causing undue stress to students.

CAROLINA LEON
STAFF WRITER

As the semester comes to a close many students in need of academic guidance from the Counseling Department will not receive it or they will struggle to obtain it due to lack of appointments available.

"We have a problem because we have many students and not enough counselors. Many people are calling in to complain about this new system but there are students who make appointments," said Selma Cohen, secretary for the Counseling Department at Valley College.

With almost 20,000 students at Valley, 23 counselors and only 13 located in the Student Services annex, many students go through the hassle and still do not have an appointment.

In October, Valley put into effect a new system for scheduling appointments online as a way of keeping up with technology. Online bookings begin at midnight every Monday and are subject to at least a 10-day delay but, more recently, they are unavailable. Students unable to make appointments online, are advised to walk into the Student Services annex at 8 a.m. in an attempt to make an appointment for the same day.

Those who visit the Counseling Department and are lucky enough to snatch an appointment are often given a time late in the day, causing many of them to rearrange their day in order to actually see a counselor. The students unable to make an appointment must continue trying online or return another day, which is a huge inconvenience for someone who also works.

Drop-in appointments at Valley are no longer available, adding to many students frustration. Students hoping to speak to counselors briefly must obtain a 15-minute appointment. Brief appointments can supposedly be made over the phone but very few are available each day.

Pierce College seems to be experiencing a similar problem. As of Dec. 3 they are no longer offering appointments until mid February, but are handling the situation differently. With a similar amount of counselors available as Valley, they are accepting all walk-in appointments for 10 minutes, giving more time to students as needed and available.

As Valley continues to make changes to theoretically better assist students, administration has overlooked an important problem. Appointments to see a counselor are hardly available. And if Valley lacks appointments, the new system has little use for students.

It's understandable with the budget cuts that there are a very few counselors who stay extremely busy but it's unacceptable to expect students to make daily attempts to schedule an appointment when none are available.

"Even when I went at 7:45 a.m., I was unable to see a counselor. They suck," said Valley student Sonia Velasco. "They told me to call and every time I do they can't help me, I still haven't seen a counselor."

THE BUNGALOWS HAVE GOT TO GO

NATALIE LOZANO | VALLEY STAR
KAPUT - The railing recently fell off the ramp of Bungalow 1.

Decrepit and decaying, the bungalows at Valley need some TLC.

CRISTINA SERRATO
STAFF WRITER

Despite the lack of ventilation within and the out-of-date disability standards, the bungalows at Valley College have stood the test of grime.

"The bungalows look old, I prefer the other side of Valley [like the] Humanities building," said Valley child development major Lilith Kocharyan.

When Valley College moved to its present location in 1951 the professors taught out of 28 "temporary" bungalows that remain in use today. Within five years Valley added several more bungalows as its enrollment increased and by 1978 Valley added 20 permanent structures. Still, the temporary structures remained in use.

"The college looks like a high school with the bungalows, when I first came here it felt like my old high school," said Valley student Christian Rosales. "[Valley should] knock them down."

In the 2002 Los Angeles Valley College Master Plan a suggestion was made to demolish the bungalows due to hazard, structural safety, and aesthetic reasons. The plan suggested using a portion of the Spring 2001 Bond Election, which allotted Valley $150 million to renovate the campus, to demolish the bungalows.

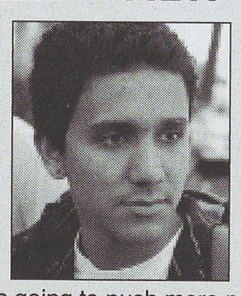
Almost a decade later the "temporary" bungalows still stand, and perhaps the powers-that-be at Valley decided that since they were to be removed anyway funds usually utilized to clean and maintain the bungalows would be better used elsewhere. The bungalows are in disrepair, dirty and creaky. The bungalow classrooms look like they have not been cleaned in ages. The windows are clouded with dirt and the smell they emanate is an unpleasant blend of sweat, body odor, mold and dust. Many students would avoid the bungalows, if possible.

"If assigned a class in the bungalows I would take a different class," said Valley student Rahim Tahjuddin. "I'm not going to be spending all that money to be in those crappy classes."

They have lasted through generations of student wear and tear, the disastrous '94 earthquake and may make it until the end of the world, if the world ends in 2012. More than half a century of memories, dirt, grime and safety issues is scheduled to be demolished by Dec. 31, 2013.

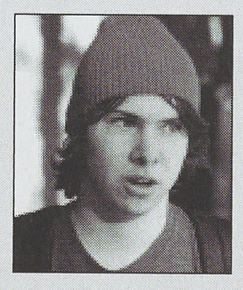
Good riddance.

VALLEY VIEW | WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IF THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS?



"It's going to push more people to actually work or completely collapse the system and basically put a bunch of people on the streets."

-DANIEL RAUL ALVAREZ, VETERINARY MEDICINE

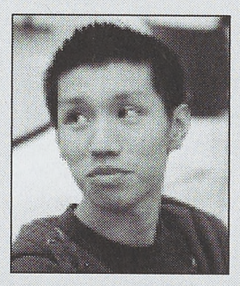


"More people will be out of work, less jobs will be out there, it's just going to be bad for everybody."

-JAMESON LAWLER, ENGINEERING

"People won't have anything to rely on, no jobs, no money. I think a lot of people will resort to crime."

-KESHINRO BABATUNDE, BIOTECHNOLOGY



"I think people will riot."

-KEVIN CHRISTOPHER LI, ENGINEERING

"People will get off their asses and get a [expletive] job that way they don't have to use unemployment."

-LATRON WILSON, BUSINESS

PHOTOS BY VARUGHAN CHAPANIAN | VALLEY STAR

THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID ...

ASHAMED TO BE AN AMERICAN

My abusive on-again, off-again relationship with the politics of this country has gone on too long.

KELLY DAVIS

At times I have been enraged by the conduct of our elected officials, at times I have been inspired, and at times I have been so hurt and disheartened that I have been forced to embrace apathy as tightly as I could to avoid being hurt even further.

The shame and mortification recently set in as I caught yet another newscast regarding WikiLeaks. As far as I'm concerned it's tabloid news, the kind of smut that should be scoffed at even on the pages of a gossip magazine. The real issue is that our elected officials are debating on extending Bush-era tax cuts for the richest 2 percent of this country while hesitating to extend unemployment benefits for millions who otherwise would go hungry, and homeless during the holiday season.

In April of 2001, Bush bamboozled us into believing that huge tax cuts for all his buddies would be good for the economy stating, "Tax relief will create new jobs, tax relief will generate new wealth, and tax relief will open new opportunities."

At that time, the unemployment rate was 4.4 percent and the national deficit was at $5.8 trillion. Today, we're looking at 9.8 percent unemployment rate and a deficit that has skyrocketed to $13.6 trillion. Obviously his new jobs, new wealth, and new opportunities didn't work out for us. It could be much worse however, but according to the Department of Labor and Congressional Budget Office, unemployment benefits saved 1.6 million jobs during each quarter of the recession.

"Every dollar of unemployment insurance generates two dollars of new economic activity – because jobless Americans spend it immediately on necessities like housing, food and transportation while they look for work," said Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project.

The $80 billion it will cost us to relieve the tax "burden" of the wealthiest 2 percent, just so they can hoard it in offshore bank accounts, could be spent on issues like healthcare and education. Now billions of would-be tax dollars will keep company the millions of jobs that have been exiled to countries overseas.

Why this is even a matter of discussion is beyond me. Even worse is that nobody is paying attention because they are too busy attempting to lynch Perez Hilton, I mean Julian Assange, for airing our dirty laundry. Is it possible that we are being distracted while this country is effectively leavened to the wealthy and the impoverished?

It's been awhile since I have reached such depth of apathy in regards to politics, but never before have I run the gamut of inspiration, outrage, and apathy all in a period of 24 hours. And for that, I am ashamed to be an American and to have given my vote of confidence to President Do-Nothing Obama and his lame-duck Democrats.

E-mail Kelly Davis at
k.davis@lavalleystar.com

GOT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

Letters to the editor can be sent to: **editor@lavalleystar.com** or submitted online at **www.lavalleystar.com.** Letters must be limited to 300 words and may be edited for content. Full name and contact information must be supplied in order for letters to be printed. Send by Thursday for the following week's issue.

Special Report

COURTESY OF JAMES FISHE.COM

BOOT CAMP MOLDS CIVILIANS INTO MARINES

Marine recruit depots transforms civilians into warriors.

LUCAS THOMPSON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Each morning at roughly 3 a.m. a series of busses arrive at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, Calif. Aboard these busses are hundreds of nervous young men who, for many months, have awaited their destiny – to be stripped of all privacy, individuality and freedom in order to earn the title of Marine.

"The first phase is them beating you down, they break you down, you're like a baby," Marine Cpl. Keith Nuckles said. "The second phase, you're like a teenager and they are teaching you things, (and) the third phase it's on you…it's like you're a sword and they're sharpening your skills."

There are two depots in the United States, which turn civilians into Marines: Recruit Depot San Diego and Recruit Depot Parris Island in South Carolina, which is the only of the two to train women.

Each year around 21,000 recruits graduate from MCRD along with an additional 17,000 from Parris Island. The 12-month training period engages recruits in rigorous physical, mental, and educational battles. The recruits are put through a series of physical challenges including intense cardio training, sleep deprivation, and water exercises in full gear.

"They teach you how to be very organized," former Marine Sgt. and Valley College student Ronald Gomez said. "They teach you to respect certain people when you meet them; we have a veteran that attends Valley who did 30 years plus in the Marine Corps and we still call him by his rank. He says, 'you don't have to call me that,' but out of respect we do it."

> **"My goal is to change a civilian male into a United States Marine."**
> -Former Drill Instructor Staff Sgt. Nick Lentz

Each recruit platoon is equipped with three drill instructors whose job it is to prepare the civilian recruits for the characteristics of battle. One drill instructor focuses on the physical aspect, one focuses on the educational part of boot camp, and the third is a senior drill instructor who oversees the recruits in a "father" type way. The drill instructors exasperate each recruit with a series of different training tactics, mind games, and mental challenges.

"My goal is to change a civilian male into a United States Marine," former drill instructor Staff Sgt. Nick Lentz said. "You have to be able to work with and change every different kind of person in different types of ways into one…thinking the same way, and working the same way."

At the end of the 12-month period each recruit must endure one final test called the "Crucible." For 54 hours straight the recruits are sent out into the field to face a series of obstacles, day and night marches, and combat scenarios. With minimal food and sleep the recruits endure maybe the most challenging days of their lives during the Crucible. The final field exercise is a rite-of-passage to becoming a Marine and an event each of them will take with them for the rest of their lives.

Despite the fact that the United States is currently sending Marines to combat, enlistments are up. According to the L.A. Times, there is a six-to nine-month wait period for any enlistee to arrive at boot camp. Two years ago, the wait at Parris Island was only three months.

Regardless of foreign affairs, politics, or the economic structure, one thing is certain: busses will continue to arrive each morning at the two Marine recruit depots in order to transform young men and women into Marines.

Economy Is Down, Enlistments Are Up

COURTESY OF USARMY.GOV

A-TEN-HUT - Given the declining job market and rising unemployment rates, enlisting has become a financial decision as well.

As the unemployment rises to 12 percent, military recruiters go above and beyond the call of duty.

ANTWONE MERCER
STAFF WRITER

With the economy down and unemployment rates up, military recruiters are finding it increasingly easier to meet and exceed their recruiting quotas.

"There has definitely been a major increase in applicants since the recession, but I don't know that there has been an increase in qualified applications," said Sgt. Brandon Parsons a Marine Corps recruiter for the Los Angeles district.

Navy Chief, and Public Affairs Officer Anthony Briggs, who oversees recruiting in the Los Angeles district, has seen an increase in the number of walk-ins from one or two a day, two years ago, to approximately 10 a day now. According to Chief Briggs, last year, 296,505 recruits have joined the armed forces, an increase of 7 percent which is at its highest since 1996. Briggs further stated, "Although loyalty remains to be a motivation for some people, many also see the military as a job with substantial benefits and little to no chances of layoffs."

According to the U.S. Marine Corps qualifications and requirements, applicants must be between the ages of 17 and 35 years old. High school diplomas are now required in most enlisted occupations.

"The Marine Corps is not accepting just any average G.I. Joe, we're only looking for top candidates," Parsons said. "As the enlistment rates continue to rise, so does our moral standards and requirements."

Prior to enlisting, each military candidate is required to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test.

"You wouldn't believe how many inner city applicants fail the ASVAB test," said Parsons. However, in a recent televised press conference at the pentagon, Bill Carr, deputy undersecretary of defense for military personnel policy, stated, "for the first time since the beginning of the all-volunteer force, all the components, active and reserve, met their numerical and quality goals."

> **"The Marine Corps is not accepting any average G.I. Joe, we're only looking for top candidates**
> -Sgt. Brandon Parsons

Enlistees who might consider the military as a last alternative are learning that behavior, even while they were minors, can prevent them from joining.

"It all boils down to these potential candidates who will put on a uniform and represent the United States – are they qualified?" Sgt. Tony Clemenson, an Army recruiter for the L.A. district, said.

According to Clemenson, approximately three out of 10 army applicants between the ages of 17 and 24 will qualify; the others get turned down because of health or mental conditions, poor performances on the military ASVAB test, or failing a criminal background check.

"We've been able to take from the cream of the crop now," Clemenson said. "As always, we take the best candidate possible. Now, because of the economy, we are able to choose from people who hadn't thought about joining the military."

DESIGNED BY J.P. SPENCE

VALLEY'S BAND O

Marine Veterans on a mission to adapt to life as student civilians.

STEPHANIE COLMAN
STAFF WRITER

To the untrained eye Sgt. Ronald Gomez-Hernandez, Sgt. Bryan Aguirre, and Cpl. Jon Sibala blend seamlessly into the melting pot that makes up Valley College's diverse student body. To the trained eye of a Marine, they're as easy to spot as a government-issued emergency flare.

"There are so many of us (veterans) on campus," said Aguirre. "Some are easily picked out by how they hold themselves. It's not pride…they're proud. They carry themselves with dignity. They're not kids. The vets…they're men. They're molded already. They've gone through a series of battles, whether they've seen combat or not, and they're ready to face the world."

Trish Gonzalez, director of Veteran Services at Valley, estimates the campus is home to more than 900 student veterans. Approximately 350, mostly in their 20s and 30s, are attending Valley as part of their G.I. Bill benefits. For soldiers used to the intricately regimented life of a Marine, life as a civilian – and a student – takes some getting used to.

Sgt. Ronald Gomez-Hernandez

Although 25-year-old Ronald Gomez-Hernandez has been out of the Marines for three years, certain old habits die hard.

"If I go into a room, I look at everyone's face," he said. I look at their hands. I look for exits so in case something happens, I know where to go." It's carryover from his urban warfare training in which he learned how to clear a room, working the area in a specific pattern designed to maximize field-of-view."

Gomez-Hernandez, born and raised in Los Angeles, decided to join the Marines while still in high school. He found himself heading down a dangerous path of experimenting with drugs and looking for trouble, and knew he needed to do something before it was too late.

"I'm the first generation in my family born in this country," he said. "My parents travelled here from El Salvador and I didn't feel like I was doing what they believed in when they came here." He shipped off to boot camp three months after graduating from high school. Trained as a field radio operator and initially stationed in Okinawa, Japan, his first unit specialized in embassy evacuations and participated in numerous gut-wrenching humanitarian missions, for which he received three special awards. At 19, he was responsible for a platoon of 10-15 soldiers, along with more than $800,000 worth of communications equipment. By age 20 he was promoted to sergeant and finished his tour training members of the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion to use and maintain communication equipment.

> **"Earning the title of Marine is something I hold very dear to me. I would never take anything back. I went through some rough stuff and saw some things that people shouldn't see, but I'd do it again in a heartbeat.**
> -Ronald Gomez Hernandez

This particular unit was routinely called to Iraq. Gomez-Hernandez made it as far as the list of those scheduled to go next. When he told his mother, she cried. In an unexplainable twist of military fate, his number never came up. "I was in the mindset to go," he recalls. "I don't know how I'm one of the few who didn't have to go. I guess it just wasn't meant to be. I had my own set of experiences."

Trace evidence of those experiences can still be seen in how Gomez-Hernandez acts on a daily basis. As we chat, a helicopter flies overhead and he immediately looks up. "I have to see who and what it is," he said. On the road, he still maintains a certain distance from the car ahead of him. "If an IED (Improvised Explosives Device) explodes, you're at a safe distance not to catch any shrapnel from the vehicle," he explains.

In addition to maintaining certain habits that once existed to potentially save his life and the lives of those in his unit, little things like how he walks or his penchant for biweekly haircuts further support the old adage of, "Once a Marine, always a Marine." "The way I walk…I technically march in a sense. My shoes always wear out in the back first," he says, lifting his foot to reveal uneven shoe wear. "I still get these haircuts," he explains, pointing to his slightly grown out "high and tight," Marine Corps' signature hair cut. "I see the guys with the gel and spikey hair and I can't do that. I usually can't go more than two weeks without a haircut."

An electrical engineering major, Gomez-Hernandez hopes to graduate in June 2012 and plans to transfer to Cal State Los Angeles.

> **"Do I regret it? No. Do I miss the Marine Corps? Absolutely. I love the Marine Corps. I bleed green. It'll always be who I am.**
> -Bryan Aguirre

Sgt. Bryan Aguirre

Growing up in the very patriotic city of Mercedes, TX, Bryan Aguirre wanted to be a Marine for as long as he can remember.

"I've wanted to be a Marine since I was a kid," he said. "I can remember as far back as four or five years old…watching the commercial where the Marine slays the dragon. Ever since then, I kept it in my mind. It was always there."

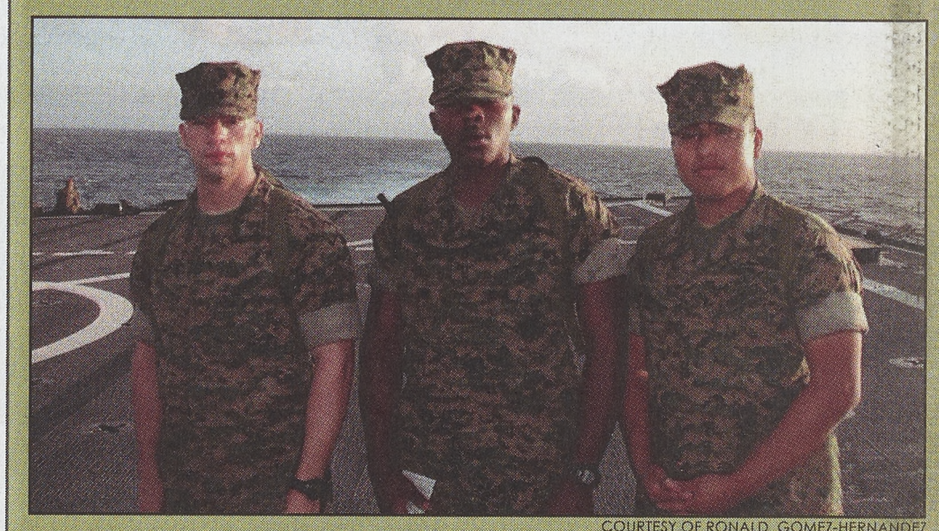
As a 250-pound lineman on his high school football team, many people initially doubted Aguirre's ability to shape up and meet the rigorous physical demands of the Marine lifestyle. Aguirre never had any doubts, and possessed a healthy dose of the Marine motto, "adapt and overcome," long before donning his first pair of government-issued fatigues.

Looking back at his eight years of service, he realizes there were times in which his capabilities surprised even himself.

"I think back to stuff I did, and I can't believe I did half that stuff," he said. "At the same time, you know you can do it, but you still can't believe that was you. There were times when we engaged (in combat) and it was scary, but you kept calm and under control and kept moving forward."

Aguirre attended boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, and first served with a grunt unit sent to Iraq for nine months in 2003. Life as a grunt is all about humping, the military's term for marching fast with full combat load. "We'd hump from one place to another to get ready to fight, or do reconnaissance, or even to set up an ambush," Aguirre explains. "You're always on the move by foot and a little by vehicle. You're always ready to engage."

By early 2004, Aguirre had started his second tour to Iraq, this time to Fallujah, work-



COURTESY OF RONALD GOMEZ-HERNANDEZ

ALL HANDS ON DECK- Sgt. Ronald Gomez-Hernandez on deck aboard a naval ship during his stint in the service.

Special Report

VALLEY STAR | DECEMBER 8, 2010

ND OF BROTHERS

VARUGHAN CHAPANIAN, PHOTO EDITOR | VALLEY STAR

FAMILY TIME - Sgt. Bryan Aguirre now enjoys the time he can spend with his daughter.

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ing hand-in-hand with a reconnaissance team. Their mission was to find and report on weaknesses throughout insurgent-occupied areas as part of the effort to take over various parts of the city. Shortly after Aguirre left in September that same year, the US successfully took over Fallujah. It was his last combat mission.

Aguirre re-enlisted in 2006 with the goal of acquiring a skill that would easily transfer to civilian life when he got out. Soon after, he married and with plans for a family, he no longer wanted to be in combat. He chose utilities engineering and spent the remainder of his service stationed in Okinawa, Japan where he participated in numerous humanitarian missions throughout Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, Australia and the Philippines. His unit helped purify water, provide electricity and built schools, homes and professional structures. He recently completed his service in July.

Today, Aguirre is studying engineering with the goal of transferring to UCLA. One of the biggest challenges in adapting to civilian life has been the existence of free time, something not always available to a Marine.

"In the Marine Corps, you're always busy. There's not a lot of time to yourself," he said. "You're there for one thing – to protect the country. Always be ready at a moment's notice – that's what a Marine is. When I got out, I had a lot of time on my hands. It was a shock. I was excited to come to school, but I had to wait to start – there was a gap." He filled the gap with a stint as Mr. Mom, serving as primary caregiver to his 2-year-old daughter, Abrielle while his wife Anabel worked outside the home. The break allowed for some much-needed father-daughter bonding time.

As a civilian and a student with Marine Corps values at his core, Aguirre cites what he feels is a somewhat commonplace lack of courtesy and respect among the general public.

"When I was in Okinawa and Iraq, you see a different society and you can't wait to come home. Then you get home and see civilians and they're rude," he said, noting the behavior both on- and off-campus. "It bugs me when a teacher is talking to a student and (the student) is like, 'Yeah… I guess.' Whatever happened to, 'Yes, sir' and being courteous, and helping the person next to you not because it's going to benefit you, but because you want to?"

Despite his occasional frustration over lack of respect issues, Aguirre is quick to defend an individual's right to act, dress and be whoever they want to be. "They deserve that right, that's their freedom," he said. "That's what I fought for. If somebody came to this soil and tried to take one of my civilian's rights or freedoms away, they're going to have to go through me first to take it. That's what I joined for."

His first overseas assignment came in Feb. 2006 when he was sent to Djibouti, Africa to join an anti-terrorism unit providing a security force for citizens. Djibouti is rife with arms, drugs, and human trafficking.

"I was pretty nervous. I didn't know what kind of things were in Africa," he said.

While in Africa, he was responsible for administrative duties as well as training U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force soldiers in martial arts. He joined the team as an Individual Augment, a single soldier selected to split from his unit for a specific assignment. While he was in Africa, the rest of his unit was deployed to Iraq. They returned to San Diego at the same time. While he never personally deployed to Iraq, his time in Africa left him empathic to what his fellow Marines in Iraq have been through.

He recommends watching "The Hurt Locker" for an accurate glimpse into military life.

IEDs have become the preferred weapon of choice for insurgents. Their use takes not only a physical, but an emotional toll on soldiers. A simple box on the side of the road, considered litter to most, can be an adrenaline-pumping potential IED to a veteran.

> **"When times are tough, adapt and overcome. Stay positive. That's what Marines do**
>
> -Jon Sibala

"I was a driver (in Africa)," Sibala recalls. "I always carried my (9 mm pistol) and was always swerving on the road, watching out for IEDs. Coming back home and driving…you get a sense of paranoia, even now. I'll see a box on the road and I'll kid in my head, 'That's an IED.' I'm a little paranoid. That's what I was trained to do for seven months. I can't get it off me."

Despite the emotional baggage he carries, Sibala is able to look back and pinpoint good experiences that make him especially proud of his service. He feels especially fortunate to have been able to help impoverished children in Africa.

"That stuff you see on TV about helping Africa…it's really out there," he said. "I mean, shoes. They don't have shoes. They use water bottles as their slippers. It just reminds me how good we have it here. We have it really good."

A business finance major, Sibala is on track to graduate in Fall 2011. He hopes to transfer to USC.

Cpl. Jon Sibala

" I gotta put this on record," said Jon Sibala, referring to what it's like to deploy to and return from a foreign land. "A lot of veterans have deployed, and coming back from a country where you're always on your toes… coming back over here where we have an easy-breezy life…it's jaw-dropping. It's a big adjustment. From a war zone with no food, less water, you don't know where you are…and then being on the plane…America, fresh air… everything's organized. This is freedom."

Sibila grew up in a family rich in military history. His father and grandfather both served in the Philippine Army. His grandfather served under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Despite the heavy paternal influence, Sibala says he never felt pressured to follow in their footsteps. The decision to join the military was entirely his.

"I liked the feeling of relating with them on how they grew up," he said. "I also wanted to get a free education and I didn't want my parents to spend money on me."

Like Gomez-Hernandez and Aguirre, Sibala completed boot camp at Camp Pendleton and went on to train as an administrative clerk and in martial arts instruction.

VARUGHAN CHAPANIAN, PHOTO EDITOR | VALLEY STAR

THE FEW, THE PROUD - Sgt.Ronald Gomez-Hernandez displays his K-BAR Service Appreciation Display from his time as a Marine.

WAR OF THE MIND RAGES ON

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is said to affect more the 35 percent of those who serve in armed forces.

STEPHANIE COLMAN
STAFF WRITER

Valley College student and former Marine Sgt. Ronald Gomez-Hernandez can't shake the smell of dead bodies. He'll sometimes ask his fiancée, "Do you smell that?" It's an unseen scar he carries from having once spent five straight days digging for bodies in the Southern Philippines after a typhoon-induced landslide leveled the district of St. Bernard.

Research has shown that strong emotions caused by traumatic events create changes in brain chemistry that can trigger the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder. Flashbacks,nightmares, difficulty sleeping, and anger are common symptoms. James R. Dwyer, chief of PTSD services with the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, estimates that 20 to 35 percent of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will experience severe, chronic PTSD. That number is based on soldiers who seek treatment. The actual percentage of affected veterans is expected to be significantly higher due to the oftendelayed onset of symptoms, and a reluctance among some service members to reveal symptoms for fear of being seen as weak.

"Sometimes I'll have nightmares of dead bodies all over me," Gomez-Hernandez said.

"I'll wake up in a cold sweat. I've been diagnosed with depression and anxiety. They gave me mood pills, sleeping pills and depression pills, but I try not to take them. I stay busy with school and helping other people and that makes me feel better."

According to the California Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD is considered a signature wound of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. If left unchecked, in some it leads to a downward spiral ending in homelessness and suicide. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports that nationally, 18 veterans commit suicide every day.

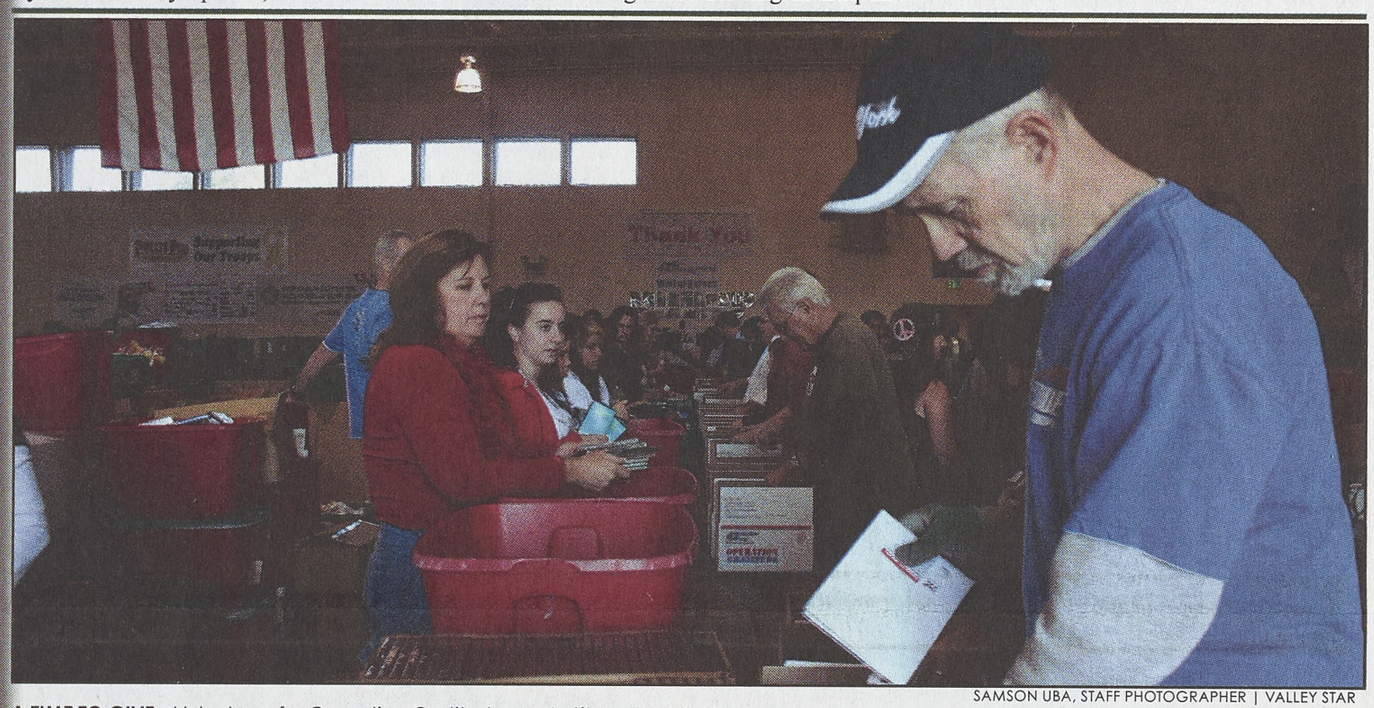
"We have a lot of problems with homelessness and suicide among veterans," said Albert Vieane of CalVet Corps, a division of California's Employment Development Department. "Statistically it's more than we had after Vietnam."

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, advances in modern medicine are partly responsible for the increase in PTSD among those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Troops today face more powerful blasts than soldiers in prior conflicts, but improved medical care in the field saves more lives and sends more soldiers home. Additionally, many in the military serve multiple tours of duty, dramatically increasing the likelihood of experiencing PTSD.

It's not just combat situations that can leave a soldier vulnerable to PTSD.

"We spent the first three days without sleep, just digging for people," Gomez-Hernandez recalls. "We couldn't find anybody. It was heartbreaking. There was no power, no water. The people were running out of food. We gave them our rations. There was a huge line. We were passing to the women and children first. There wasn't enough, but we did what we could."

On the fifth day, his unit started finding bodies."It was really bad. The smell came up and it was so sad. To this day, it's one of the biggest, life-changing things I've ever seen. When I told the guys in San Diego (a unit helater trained that was deployed to Iraq) about what I experienced in the Philippines, they were like, 'Man… I could never do that.'"



SAMSON UBA, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER | VALLEY STAR

A TIME TO GIVE - Volunteers for Operation Gratitude send gifts to thankful troops overseas.

FEELINGS OF HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Operation Gratitude's army of volunteers boosts spirits and morale with care packages for the upcoming holidays.

STEPHANIE COLMAN
STAFF WRITER

As families gather together for the holidays, Operation Gratitude serves up a hearty helping of morale-boosting "thanks" to the estimated 200,000 U.S. service men and women who are away from their families while serving in remote and hostile areas.

The organization is one of many specializing in sending care packages to soldiers. Some simple snacks, travel-size toiletries, a deck of cards, and a hand-written note shows appreciation and support of the troops, and helps the service men and women feel a connection with their home country.

"It's like Christmas every time they pass those out," said Valley College student and U.S. Marine Corps veteran Cpl. Jon Sibala. "I would like to say 'thank you' to all the mothers of America who send stuff. Even the letters that kids write…saying 'thank you.' I kept the letter and put it on my rack and would look at it. Yeah. It's like Christmas every time we get those."

Operation Gratitude, a non-profit organization founded in 2003 and headquartered at the California Army National Guard Armory in Van Nuys, sends care packages to soldiers serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and on ships throughout international waters. They specialize in reaching out to soldiers located in remote areas where basic necessities are scarce. Each box contains approximately $125 worth of donated products ranging from toiletries to pre-paid phone cards. Some of the most popular items are baby wipes for hygiene, individually wrapped, alcohol-free hand wipes used to clean weapons, and candy and Beanie Babies that soldiers give to local children, often in exchange for help in finding IEDs.

Operating exclusively on private donations and with the help of a nearly all-volunteer staff, the organization holds two collection drives each year and sends an estimated 100,000 packages annually.

"It's very humbling," said volunteer Leslie Berrenger of Valley Village. "It gives you an opportunity to give back. You get a sense of pride when (soldiers) come back and you hear about how they appreciate (the packages)."

Operation Gratitude
www.operationgratitude.com
Two major collection drives: March 1–May 5 and Sept. 13–Dec. 4. Donations of supplies collected only during these times. Financial donations to support postage costs are appreciated year-round.

Any Soldier
www.anysoldier.com
Provides specific soldier contact information allowing civilians to send packages year-round.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

The government provides five different branches of the military to protect us from sea to shining sea.

NARINE PETROSYAN
STAFF WRITER

"Army Strong." Men and women serve and protect the country in the Army branch for the military. The Army consists of two distinct, equally important components – the active and reserve. The reserve components are the U.S. Army reserve and the National Guard. The reserves serve only part time, while the guards are on the clock year-round.

"The few, the proud, the Marines." The Marine corps are one of the smallest branches of the United States military but one of the strongest, bearing only a few men and women with strength and endurance. The Marines are responsible for providing power protection from the sea by using the mobility of the Navy.

"Not for ourselves, but for our country," is what the individuals of the Navy fight for. The U.S., having the largest Navy in the world, operates 289 ships in active service and more than 3,700 aircraft.

"Always ready" are the members of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is a maritime, military, multi-mission service. It is known for having a maritime law enforcement mission (with jurisdiction in both domestic and international waters) and federal regulatory mission as part of its mission set.

"Integrity first, service before self, excellence in all we do" is what the men and women of the Air Force live by. The Air Force, also known as the Air Army in other countries, primarily conducts aerial warfare, is responsible for getting control of the air, carrying out strategic-bombing missions, and providing support to surface forces.

"When we see each other it's an instant connection, even if we've never met, because we know what we've all been through and experienced in order to serve our country," says U.S. Marine Veteran and Valley College student Vincent St. Pierre.

LAVC Events

DECEMBER
9th - 11th
Final Week of the LAVC Theatre Arts Performance of "A Christmas Carol."
The LAVC Theatre Arts Department will present "A Christmas Carol" on Thursday-Saturday, Dec. 9, 10, and 11 at 8 p.m. in the Horseshoe Theater. The story circles around a community of drifters who spare a copy of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol from a camp bonfire on one cold winter night. Despite being homeless, freezing, and hungry on Christmas Eve, these vagabonds act out the classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, and discover the true spirit of Christmas. This thrilling adaption by Pete Parkin, former department chair of Theater Arts, has been part of an LAVC tradition since 2002.
For tickets, call Brown Paper Tickets at (800) 838-3006, or order online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/135776. Seating is limited, so order your tickets early for this LAVC holiday tradition. For more information, contact Chris Coddington at (818) 947-2352 or summerfest@lavc.edu, or visit the LAVC Theater Arts Web page at www.lavctheater.com.

! THINK TRANSFER

FAFSA filing period Jan. 1 - March 2, 2011. Apply at www.fafsa,ed.gov

DECEMBER

Wednesday, 8th
National University Rep
10 a.m. - noon
Monarch Square
Undecided Major/ Career Workshop
5:30-6:30 p.m.

Thursday, 9th
Antioch University Rep
1-3 p.m.
Monarch Square
CSUN Financial aid workshop
1-2 p.m.
Undecided Major/ Career Workshop
1-2 p.m.

All activities held in the Career/ Transfer Center (Student Services Building Annex) unless otherwise indicated. Call for further information (818) 947-2646.

Two For You Delights Students

Woodwind duo performs while educating students on musical enlightenment.

COURTNEY BASSLER
STAFF WRITER

Free Concert Wednesdays, with flutist Keiko Okamoto and clarinetist Therese Grundl, known together as Two for You set out to enlighten students on the musicality of two woodwind instruments performing to an audience of over 50 people in Valley College's Music Recital Hall.

While the flute and the clarinet may come across as a compatible combination since both are woodwinds, it is actually a pair that isn't typical for duets.

"It's an unusual combination," said Okamoto. "We usually play music arranged for violin and viola."

The duo opened with two pieces from the 20th century, "Three American Miniatures" by John Rutter and "Three Duos for Flute and Clarinet" by the late Robert Muczynski, a professor at Arizona University.

Afterwards, Grundl and Okamoto moved on to playing short pieces from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods featuring music from Adam de la Halle, Pierre Certon and Georg Philipp Telemann.

Grundl elucidated to the audience that they chose this music to give the "opportunity to listen differently" because when hearing those pieces from certain periods many don't put a flute and clarinet together.

Throughout the concert, Grundl and Okamoto focused on educating the audience on counterpoint, playing in conjunction with each other with separate lines. While it was nice to educate the students and audience, it would have been nice if the two explained their choices for the music or why the combination of flute and clarinet can open up an array of pieces to play with the vast range of their instruments.

Two for You then continued with Bach's "Two-Part Invention No. 9" where Okamoto explained that the first time she ever played this was as a child when she was playing the piano and then they went back to the 20th century, playing movements from Antoni Szalowski's "Duo for Flute and Clarinet."

Okamoto and Grundl ended the session with Mozart's "Poco Adagio" and "Rondo."

English Major Daniel Alvarez attended for the first time and was glad he came out for the concert.

"It's a new experience," Alvarez said. "It something that many people can see or do. It's important to get involved in your school."

Even though many people in the audience were there to be exposed to different types of genres of music for an unlikely partnership of the woodwinds, which was quite eye-opening, it might be a good idea if the concerts weren't mainly geared towards students who are music majors. Some of the terminology throughout the concert, could have seemed a bit daunting to a student walking into the concert because he or she wanted to take Alvarez's advice and get involved on campus.

Next week, the series has been moved to Thursday, Dec. 9 from 11:20 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for a Performance Workshop Concert featuring students from Valley in the Music Recital Hall, free of charge.

SAMSON UBA | VALLEY STAR

DOUBLE TROUBLE - Two For You consists of Therese Grundl (right) on clarinet and Keiko Okamoto (left) on flute.

The Dark Side of Swan Lake

Darren Aronofsky's new film is a strong contender for Oscar gold.

DAVID MOTTE
VALLEY LIFE EDITOR

Every Oscar season the dominance of manufactured dramas, political thrillers and biopics seem to overshadow the sometimes more deserving artistic films, but one exception this season might be Darren Aronofsky's unspecified genre film "Black Swan" starring Natalie Portman and a very proficient supporting cast.

"Black Swan" tells the story of Nina (Portman), a New York City dancer who is completely consumed with ballet. The virginal and capricious ballerina lives with her mother (Barbara Hershey) who zealously supports her daughter's ambition but is equally overbearing. When Nina's artistic director Thomas (Vincent Cassel) fires his prima ballerina Beth (Wynona Ryder), Nina becomes his first choice for the lead double role in the new season's opening production of "Swan Lake." Though Nina is more than qualified to portray the White Swan, Thomas is unsure that she has the guile or sensuality required for the dark side of the Swan Queen known as the Black Swan. As Nina struggles to be perfect and Thomas tries to bring the dark sexuality required for the role out of her, a new addition is brought into the company named Lily (Kunis), who quickly becomes Nina's alternate in the performance.

As Nina and Lily's relationship alternates between rivalry and twisted friendship, Nina becomes more in touch with her dark side and in her mind, literally transforms into the Black Swan. Nina becomes reckless with paranoia, descending into a downward spiral which threatens to destroy her.

In this psychological thriller meets horror film which was essentially meant as a companion piece to Aronofsky's most recent film, "The Wrestler," the protagonist is also pushed to the extremes of her physicality and her mind falls into turmoil. The "Swan Lake" themed movie is a mélange of Powell and Pressburger's "The Red Shoes" with Polanski's "Repulsion," that hints at Aronofsky's first movie "Pi." Aronofsky's use of a single handheld camera flawlessly captures the energy, pain and artistry of the ballet as it dances and spins with the dancers while bringing a very welcomed horror element to the film.

Natalie Portman gives an Oscar-worthy performance in a role unlike anything she's ever done. It would be beyond reason for her not to win the Oscar for Best Actress. And Mila Kunis surprisingly redeems herself from her atrocious performance in "The Book of Eli" as a darker contrast to Nina's naiveté.

Just as the story follows the theme of "Swan Lake", Clint Mansell's musical score also weaves strands of Tchaikovsky's iconic music, intertwining the main theme of the ballet with his own ominous yet expressive sounds. Every song on the soundtrack also incorporates the famous theme including various tracks from the Chemical Brothers, helping Mansell's score to also be worthy of the little golden naked man.

With the exception of "Inception,""Black Swan" may be the most original movie to come out all year amidst all the superhero sequels and remakes/re-imaginings. Though it comes highly recommended, be sure to bring an oxygen tank, for this movie literally sucks the oxygen right out of the theater with its intensity.

COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT

TWO CENTS FROM SPENCE

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Studios focused more on money than material wonder why sales are down.

J.P. SPENCE

Here's a thought. Maybe people don't go to movies as much as they used to because so many crappy movies are being made and the general public doesn't want to cosign a mortgage for two tickets.

This statement not only comes as a media critic but as a lifelong fan of cinema.

This past weekend, box office revenues opened to the second lowest grossing weekend of the year. Traditionally, the weekend after the Thanksgiving holiday is slow with regards to new movie releases, but not necessarily in overall gross earnings. It's understandable for revenue to be low but it's another thing when considering the why and the how.

Here was the weekend's top four films from top to bottom: "Tangled," "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," "Burlesque," and "Unstoppable." That sounds about right. You have Disney, Harry Potter, a female friendly musical and the same Denzel Washington movie that he did a year ago with a different name attached to it.

The bottom six is where things turn sour. From six to ten you have "Love and Other Drugs," "Megamind," "Due Date," "Faster," "The Warrior's Way," and "The Next Three Days." First, it should be noted that the lowest grossing film, "The Next Three Days," earned a total of $2.5 million, which is considered anemic in the industry. To make matters worse, the film has grossed roughly $18 million when the budget was $60 million leaving a loss of $42 million.

It doesn't make a difference to me about the gross earnings, but it is a sign of the growing disconnect between the studios and the audience. Moreover, this shows a disconnect between the haves and the have-nots in quality filmmaking. Last weekend, "The Warrior's Way" was the only new major release of the week. It's safe to say that no one wanted to see the film whose tagline in commercials were "Pirates...damn." This is insulting when a remarkable film like "Black Swan" is only available in limited release and even in its wide release is a fraction of what a film like "Due Date" received.

An even better example would be "127 Hours." This film opened in only four theatres nationwide and has snowballed into more houses as strong word-of-mouth of the film's intensity has grown. It's a shame that the latest Danny Boyle project has to fight for leverage when a bloated Russell Crowe is generating empty seats.

There is this concept of "prestige films," "tentpole films," and just plain filler. The idea is to have the blockbuster tentpole films in the summer make enough money to cover the losses of the crappy films, while the Oscar-award-winning prestige films in the fall give the studios artistic leverage to produce crap between now and blockbuster season.

The point is this. Studios have the capacity for artistic, beautiful films and mind-melding action films.

They do it every year. Imagine the possibilities if the studios stop wasting money on turd nuggets like "The Warrior's Way" and redirected that money to a film like "Biutiful" or "The Rabbit Hole." If the audience is watching something of value on screen maybe they wouldn't care so much about being plundered at the box office.

E-mail J.P. Spence at *managing@lavalleystar.com*

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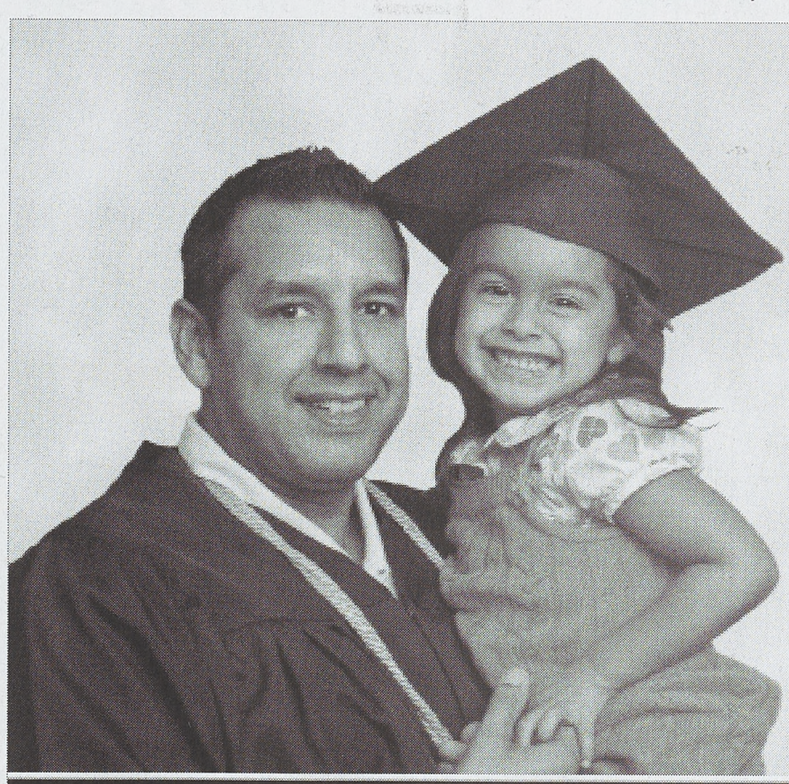

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BREWING UP SOME GOOD FUN IN THE VALLEY

A fun environment can make a better game experience in the Valley.

JAMIE NORRIED
COPY EDITOR AND
CRISTINA SERRATO
STAFF WRITER

A great environment with big screen TVs and cold drinks can really improve your game-watching experience. With a variety of nearby bars and pubs claiming to be "sports bars" it can be hard to sort through the impostors and the real deal.

There are roughly 13 so-called sports bars within three miles of Valley College, but not all sports bars are created equal. The dedicated staff at the Valley Star journeyed to find a truly great sports bar or pub within a few blocks. Four taverns later, a winner was declared.

Though Ireland's 32 is the closest pub to Valley -- only a few blocks away on the corner of Woodman and Burbank -- it is not truly a "sports bar." It has few TVs and unlike many other local bars and pubs, Ireland's 32 offers no sports-related drink specials or incentives. However, they do offer strong drinks, live music, clean bathrooms, great waitresses, breakfast, and happy-hour appetizers that range from $2 to $7 between 4 and 6 p.m.

Rocco's Tavern, located at Ventura Boulevard and Whitsett Avenue, offers sports enthusiasts 13 TVs to watch a variety of games, 20 beers on tap, and 2-for-1 drink specials every day from 3 to 7 p.m. This medium-sized tavern, with a crowd that ranges from college students to middle-aged patrons, has a friendly and attentive staff, a live DJ on Saturday nights, and serves food until 1 a.m.

Rocco's fits the description of a sports bar, but may not fit the bill for sports fanatics. However, with an intimate and playful ambiance and good food served late, this is the go-to place after your favorite sports bar has quit serving the wings you love.

Located at Riverside Drive and Laurel Canyon Boulevard, Pat's Bar and Grill is a tiny establishment bursting with big energy. Customers quickly become regulars amongst the friendly staff who offer fast and friendly service. Every night there is a different incentive to come to Pat's. Monday offers 50-cent Miller High Life until the first team scores, Wednesday from 8 to 10 p.m. there is a $10 all-you-can drink domestic beer special and $20 all-you-can-drink premium beer or shots, and every night the "Stimulus Wheel" is rolled at 11 p.m. – whatever it lands on is $3 until closing time. In addition, Kerry's Café next door has a service window directly linked to the bar and serves low-priced sandwiches, salads, and munchies until 11 p.m.

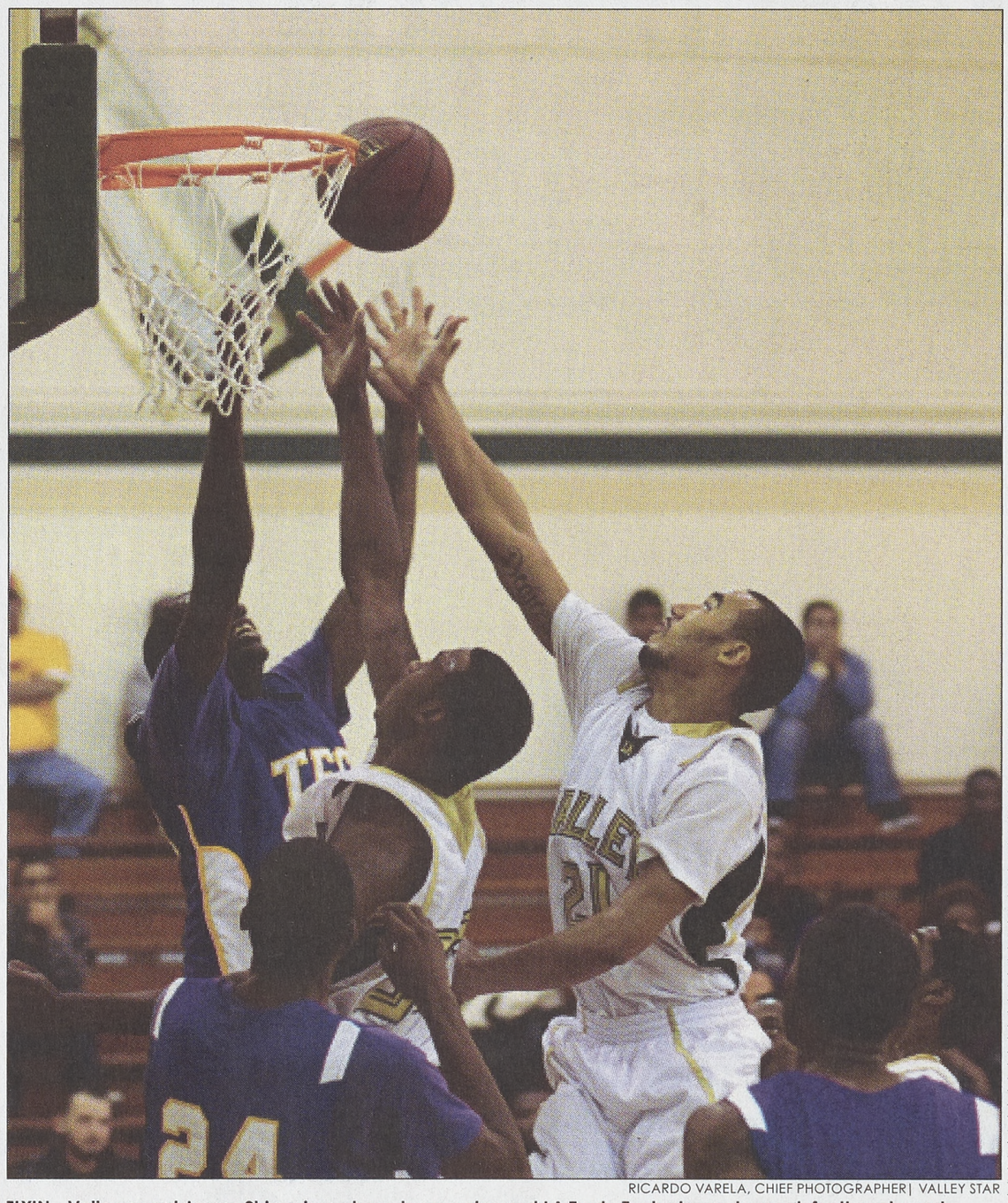
There is live music, dancing and darts, and though Pat's offers unbeatable drink specials, the tiny space and few TVs take away from the sports feel of a sports bar; however, Pat's is a great place to visit in the off-season.

The hands-down winner for the best sports bar near Valley is The Draft. Located at Riverside Drive and Whitsett Avenue, this lively bar has around 10 large flat-screen TVs broadcasting several games all at once, while the large tables have 11-inch monitors at each end so that patrons can get a closer look. The sports atmosphere is amplified by the themed wallpaper, paintings, pictures, posters and memorabilia. The very essence of this bar and grill is sports.

If that is not incentive enough for sports fans to attend, or bring unwilling spouses along, perhaps the good food, pool tables, darts, dancing, hot waitresses, live DJs, beer pong, and Wii or Rock Band showdowns can be a deal breaker. Sports to the core, The Draft offers specials like NFL $3 Bud Light Sundays and $1 Bud Light when the Lakers play. With great prices and a fabulous atmosphere, there is no better place for sports fans to watch their favorite team than at The Draft.

For more information on each of these establishments please visit their Web sites at:

www.Irelands32Pub.com
www.RoccosTavernLA.com
www.PatsBarandGrill.com
www.TheDraftBarandGrill.com



RICARDO VARELA, CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER| VALLEY STAR
FLYIN - Valley guard James Shipp rises above teammates and LA Trade Tech players to reach for the rebound.

MONARCHS WIN AT BUZZER

Saturdays game proved to be a stunning win for Valley

CRISTINA SERRATO
STAFF WRITER

After a slow start and rough beginning to the second half, the monarch battled and regained their footing for a victorious 71-69 win over LA Trade Tech at the final buzzer.

"I thought our guys did a great job of battling to get back in the game," said Valley College Head basketball coach Virgil Watson. "It's a great win for us. They are in the top 10 in Southern California."

The fact that LA Trade Tech is within the top 10 in Southern California did not intimidate the Monarchs who had practiced hard and had devised plays to slow the speedy Beavers. LA Trade Tech consistently dominated the game and at half time Valley trailed by a point, 41-40, after a hard fought battle to gain the lead despite an array of turnovers.

"I'm just proud of everybody. The whole week we stressed practice," said sophomore Guard James Shipp Jr. "Everybody stepped up tonight and played their role."

The Monarchs fell flat in the beginning of the second half when the Beavers quickly gained a six-point lead and continually intercepted Monarch passes. The free throw line became quite popular as the number of personal fouls against both teams racked up. Luckily for Valley, LA Trade Tech had difficulty connecting at the free throw line.

"I was just hoping that I got an open look so I could knock it down and score," said Gaurd Marcus Johnson who had scored the winning three-pointer. "My teammates good defense gave me a chance."

In the final moments with less than a minute on the clock Valley, who had battled hard to maintain keep up against LA Trade Tech, called a time out. Only a point behind the Monarchs returned to the court determined to win. After a quick shake-n-bake and a pass, the ball landed in the hands of forward Marcus Johnson who shot the ball home for a three-pointer and the win. The sound of screaming fans and the buzzer ringing in the win ended the game and evening for the Beavers.

"This was a great win, but it's only the beginning," said Johnson.

The Monarchs have a tournament against Santa Barbara this weekend and look forward to another victory.

T-BONE IS STILL THE MAN

Valley College football's go-to guy revisited.

CRISTINA SERRATO
STAFF WRITER

If you want to see the coaches and players of the Valley College football team crack a smile, just mention T-Bone, the team's equipment manager. His sunny personality invokes smiles and laughter from all who know him.

"T-Bone just brings a smile to your face," said Matt Crater, assistant defensive coach for Monarch football. "He does it all."

Trung Nguyen acquired the nickname T-Bone from the football coaches and players several years ago, because one of the many talents the multifaceted Nguyen has is the ability to cook great chili and "a mean steak."

"I enjoy working at Valley," said T-Bone, smiling from ear to ear. "I'm in control of all the equipment from A to Z myself. Everyone here is very nice and helpful."

The 58-year-old T-Bone does a wide array of tasks for the football team; from sewing jerseys, organizing equipment, taking inventory, and doing laundry all the way to electrical issues and field repair. He is a jack of all trades for the team and shows no signs of slowing despite his age. T-Bone takes every request in stride; he rarely gets frazzled and is slow to anger. No task is too large or small and he is greatly appreciated by a slew of people at Valley.

"T-Bone has been here a long time, he has a wealth of experience in his background," said Head football Coach Jim Fenwick. "He is one of those rare people who are eager to please, he loves to help and please people. He is a real joy."

You would never know by looking at Nguyen that he has lived a difficult life. Being raised in a time of excruciating war and death was a sad reality for him. He escaped his native country of Vietnam on a ship with 140 other soldiers the night before Saigon fell in 1975. He left behind his mother and forever lost connections with his sister whom he hopes made it safely to France.

After leaving Vietnam, the ship he was on was escorted by an American fleet to the Philippines, then to Guam. Nguyen stayed alongside 500,000 other Vietnamese refugees in Guam for two months before he came to the states. He moved around 11 times and had several different menial jobs before he came to Valley in 1985 and asked former head coach and athletic director Chuck Ferrero for employment.

VARUGHAN CHAPANIAN, PHOTO EDITOR | VALLEY STAR
RESPECT - Monarch Football equipment manager "T-BONE" loves what he does.

Valley quickly became a home for T-Bone.

"T-Bone is the backbone of the team ... they come to him for everything," said Valley Sports Information Director Dale Beck.

Nguyen's smiling face and joyful attitude have been a familiar sight on campus for the last 26 years and he has no plans of leaving anytime soon.

"The kids here are nice and respectful," said T-Bone as he sorted clothes in the men's locker room. He barely stopped moving long enough to say with a smile, "Every year is a new batch of students, every year is a joy to work with them."

ANALYZE THIS

BOTTOM LINE: IT'S A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Learning from the media.

LUCAS THOMPSON

Last season after the Valley College men's basketball team ended their season in the second round of playoffs, I approached one of the players after the game for an interview. Within seconds of my conversation with the player, Head Coach Virgil Watson ordered him, from across the court, not to talk to me and to go into the locker room. I suppose maybe if they had won, it wouldn't have been a problem.

A similar situation arose last Saturday when the team played L.A. Trade Tech College. One of the Valley Star reporters approached Watson at half-time to ask if she could speak with him and the players after the game, he then responded, "You can maybe talk to me, but you can't talk to my players." Although Watson allowed the reporter to talk with two players, of his choice, and we have now been informed of provisions set forth for us to talk to the players after they have left the locker room, it should have never been an issue to begin with.

The bottom line is it's a learning experience. It's a learning experience for us as journalism majors, and it's a learning experience for the athletes in dealing with the media. Without the athlete we have nothing to cover, and without the media the athlete doesn't exist to the public.

"If we are going to accept the praise then we are going to have to accept the criticism," Valley College Sports Information Director Dale Beck said. "Balanced reporting is what I care about [but] it's the same thing as a movie, you roll the dice, you don't know if the reviewer is going to like it [but] you have to have the reviewer go to the movie...that's the publicity."

Really? Is this the way we are handling the media in a college environment? We as the media are only attempting to create a collegiate setting which informs the student body, faculty and staff about events and clubs on campus. Unfortunately this becomes somewhat difficult when we are unable to get call-backs or responses to e-mails from several coaches on campus. I guess they just don't check their messages.

Inversely, when the Monarch football team ended their season and chances at a bowl game against Pierce College this season, Fenwick talked. He spoke with myself and another reporter from Pierce at maybe the most devastating moment of the season. Maybe it's because he has coached at Division 1 schools or maybe it's because he has had more experience, or maybe it's because he understands the importance.

Believe it or not, there are people who want to know how the games went over the weekend, there are people who are following the basketball team and its season, and it's our job to inform them week in and week out.

So coaches, players, please help us do our job. Please help us get it right. Trust me, you'll want us around when the success comes.